Trade Ties with Thailand

1827. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Thailand is planning to set up a special body to speed up economic and trade ties with India and other South Asian Countries as reported in the daily 'Telegraph' of 19th July, 1994; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and whether his Ministry has taken any initiative in follow up action?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) No formal proposal to this effect has been received by the Government.

(b) Does not arise.

Export of Carpets to US

1828. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the US Administration has decided to drop the proposal to ban carpet imports into their country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that most of the carpets manufactured in India are being exported to US thereby earning huge foreign exchange; and

(c) if so, whether Government are planning to help the carpet industry to improve the export performance of the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Two bills (which are neither country-specific nor product-specific) seeking to prohibit imports into the US of products made wholly or in part with child labour are at present pending in the US Congress and the US Administration is reported not to have taken a definitive stand so far on the subject.

(b) and (c) Exports of hand knotted carpets to the USA were constituting about 33 per cent of India's total exports of carpets worth Rs. 1390 crore during 1993-94. While Government have taken steps for improving the enforcement of our laws on child labour, market development campaigns abroad have also been intensified to put the incidence of child labour in the carpet industry in proper perspective so that carpet exports do not suffer on this score.

Targets for rice Exports

1829. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the year-wise targets of rice exports over the period of the Eighth Plan;

(b) the expected earnings of foreign exchange from such exports; and

(c) the anticipated increase in the price level of rice of all varieties as a consequence of such exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Export projections in the VIII Plan, in respect of rice are as under:

(Rs. in Crores at 1991-92 prices)

1991-92	1996-97	Rate of growth per annum
755	1127	8.3%

(c) As export of only superior varieties of non-basmati rice and basmati rice are permitted, Government does not anticipate any significant impact on the price level of rice in the country.

Trade centres along borders

1830. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal under consideration for setting up trade centres along the country's borders and

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal and the steps taken by Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a)